

ALAN DALE DISCOVERS A STAGE ARTIST WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH.

And She Is Native Born, Is Miss Marie Halton, and Just Back from Europe.

She Hasn't Any Diamonds, and No One Has Ever Committed Suicide for Her.

What She Says of Her New Act, Her Gowns and Songs and Her Pickaninnies.

I feel dreadfully ashamed of myself. Not only that, but I am impelled to tremble slightly as I reflect that an outraged populace may string me up and stone me. I have defied the conventions; literally broken through all established precedents, and slighted the international managers whose duty it is to inject slices of London and Paris into the wholesome New York flesh. Not to keep you in ignorance of my misdeeds any longer, I will say (ah! how I hate to say it) that I have dared to talk—for publication—to a native American artist, who to-morrow night will appear upon a stage dedicated to foreign talent. In other words, I have spoken to Miss Marie Halton, who is "billed" for Koster & Bial's.

Probably you know nothing at all about it. Miss Halton—foolish, foolish woman!—has no string of suicidal degenerates danc-

ing at her chateleine. No press agent has ransacked the peerage for names of titled doits who have slain themselves for the sweet sake of her piquancy. If she owes diamonds—and struggle as a woman will, it is almost impossible to avoid owing diamonds—she keeps them at the bottom of her trunk for ballast. She has no \$15,000,000 job lot of tiaras to cart about from city to city. Then, as I said before, Miss Halton is an American. There is no use beating about the bush, and calling a spade a heart or a club. Miss Halton is an American, and I will tell you why.

She was born in America. Oh, charitable ones, forgive her that transgression! She could not help it. We are born, willy-nilly, at the dulcet discretion of our mothers. They never consult us. Although your birth in a stable would not of necessity make you a horse, you are an American if you first see the light of day in America. Marie Halton did that.

So you will understand why I tremble as I wield a pen to tell you about an American girl who has come back from abroad to appeal to her own country people. You see, I know that I shall be quite alone, and I hate solitude. If Miss Halton had been some spaghetti-eating Italian, or some scottish Parisienne with relatives in South Fifth avenue, every "interviewer" in the city would be pestering her for the story of her past life and her real name. As it is, she is merely an American girl who some years ago made a big hit at the Casino in comic opera, foolishly forsook her embryonic laurels and went abroad, appeared at the Lyric Theatre in London, and the Folies Marini in Paris, managed a London playhouse, established herself as surely as an erratic woman can establish herself, and came back at the dictates of her own caprices. And the gentlemen who are supposed to have the interests of the stage woven into their arteries and ventricles say to themselves: "That isn't our style. It isn't Barrieonian enough. It isn't sufficiently Otero-esque. It isn't in the least Gilbertian. This Miss Halton isn't even a mademoiselle or a signorina. She might at least have deigned to be a fraulein. A fraulein is better than nothing. We are not going to bother ourselves about a miss who speaks English as well as we do. It would be too ridiculous. Ha! Ha! Ha! And permit us also to add He! He! He!"

That's why I tremble and am afraid of being strung up. But you'll forgive me, boys and girls, won't you, for daring to intrude upon you with nothing better than an American subject. Remember, I've done my duty like a man. I have devoted unlimited space to the gorgeous Otero and her grandmother's diamonds. If you imagine that I enjoyed such chronicles you make the mistake of your life. I sacrificed my own sentiments to yours. Therefore, patient ones, let me have an innings. Bear with me for a while.

I saw Marie Halton in the cozy little business office of Koster & Bial's music hall. No mental "look up my card" to ask madame if she would condescend to receive me. No jabbering "personal representative" ushered me into the patchouli presence. No carefully arranged "artist" sat in state prepared to say that she doted on America, at a moment's notice. Nothing of the sort. As I sat and chatted with the regal McConnell, in walked a fresh and blooming young woman, wholesome to look at, brimming over with good nature, and the very nicest sort of American refinement (than which there is nothing more charming on earth, when you get to it).

"This is Miss Halton," said Mr. McConnell. "I am afraid that you won't understand her, because she speaks English. But I shall be most happy to act as your interpreter. She says: 'Good morning! That means 'Bon jour.'"

"Ah, humorous McConnell! With all your good-tempered chaff, you understood the situation. You saw the grotesque position in which I placed myself when I decided to talk with an American artist. You'll be able to write a book out of these days."

In the meantime I looked at Miss Halton in amazement. Not a diamond glistened in her vicinity. Nude ears, nude fingers greeted my eyes. Could anything be more demoralizingly simple? I was almost appalled. But I was obliged to admit that her attire was lovely in its perfect good taste, that had none of the "fakery" of your Gilberts and your Oteros about it. She wore a green velvet skirt that rustled in musical slinkiness, a black astrakhan jacket, the opening of which permitted a glimpse of something pink and mottled in the way of bodices, and a large hat that was decidedly effective. I haven't smoked Miss Halton's face with my cigarettes, but it is a very comely face for all that—a brainy face, with cerebral expression that is always changing. Bald-headed degenerates would not kill themselves for it, but young men with the proper amount of wig, and duly furnished with the normal amount of brain, could scarcely avoid liking it very much indeed.

"Alors, vous aimez l'Amérique?" I began using the dear old formula, in dear old French. Then I immediately apologized for the slip, and changed my query to one expressing a desire to know why Miss Halton contemplated an appearance at Koster & Bial's.

Miss Halton laughed to gain time. She didn't want to give the wrong thing, and she was not quite sure what the right thing might be. So she laughed. And then she laughed again. And then I laughed, to keep her in countenance.

"I suppose my reason for appearing on the music hall stage," she said, "is a very usual one. I am waiting until a musical comedy, in which I propose to appear, is ready. And in the meantime—I have no body to give me diamond things for my neck and head. You quite understand, I hope."

I did. Indeed I did, although she spoke that unfamiliar English language in delightfully musical tones.

"Seriously," said Miss Halton, "I have been contemplating the music hall for a long time. In London I was always on the eve of taking the step. I thought of it in Paris. Something always held me back. My friends abroad told me not to do it, and I listened to them. One is so accustomed to listen to friends, you know. Finally I said to myself, after my 'Santa Maria' engagement, 'I'm at home now, and the halls seem to be very inviting. Why shouldn't I make an appearance there, and try, what I have always wanted to try, in my own native land?'"

Her own native land! You see, she openly admitted that she was an American. Don't blame me.

"I have not abandoned comic opera by any means," said Miss Halton, "and when I appear I shall do so with a good company. I don't want to star. Starring is one of the great mistakes that women make. They tire the public in their efforts to attract attention to themselves rather than to their surroundings. I don't want to star. I want to be a feature of a good, all-round performance, just as I am going to try to be a feature of a good all-round performance at Koster & Bial's to-morrow night. I have thought it well over, and I believe that I have something interesting to offer."

"Tell me about it," I purred. "What for?" asked Miss Halton. "What for?" I echoed, agitated. "What for?" cried Monsieur McConnell, in disgust. "Yes, what for?" persisted Miss Halton defiantly.

"I haven't spoken about it to anybody. It is a surprise. Why should I give away my surprises? What can you offer me in return but facetious comments? Ah, yes, I can see you laughing at poor Mary. (I call myself Mary, because Marie grows so fatiguing.) I can imagine exactly what you will write about it. Too much advertisement is a great evil. I don't like it. I got it once, and its cruelty and mercilessness almost broke my heart."

That was several years ago. Since that time you haven't seen Mary's name paraded in the papers, have you?"

I was obliged to admit that I hadn't. I felt that she was interviewing me.

"I have seen the people who played that horrible trick upon me," she continued, "just to advertise their own theatre, go steadily downward. I am not a religious woman, but I believe that there is some one above who is not going to allow injustice to triumph. I was very badly treated in those days. I was held up to public disfavor, and I was very unhappy. I never

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"Yes, I have actually dared to have a dress made here. I really have a figure although you wouldn't think it to look at my face, would you?"

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